

1Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
13540 E. Boundary Rd.
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

6/12/2008

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to formally thank you and Equal Justice America for the opportunity to work as a law clerk for Bet Tzedek Legal Services during the 2008 Spring Semester. My experience with Bet Tzedek was educational and personally fulfilling. I enjoyed my experience so much that I decided to remain at Bet Tzedek as a law clerk this summer.

During my time at Bet Tzedek, I worked primarily with the Employment Rights Project. The ERP's primary focus was assisting low-income clients with wage and hour claims. I conducted intake interviews, performed research, drafted letters and legal memos, and communicated regularly with clients. Their claims ranged from not being given rest and meal breaks, to not being paid overtime, to not being paid at all.

Aside from the Employment Rights Project, I also worked on cases that involved housing law, the denial of government benefits, bankruptcy, and wills and trusts. However, the highlight of my clerkship at Bet Tzedek was the chance to work with a client who had been denied unemployment benefits. After the client's benefits were denied, I had the chance to represent him during the appeal of the denial. This client was down to his last few hundred dollars and was close to being homeless. His previous employer claimed he was terminated for misconduct and, thus, not eligible for unemployment benefits. It was my duty to draft an argument for the upcoming administrative hearing and represent the client at the hearing itself.

The day of the hearing was truly exhilarating. Both the client and I were nervous wrecks, but we managed to pull it all together by the time we went before the judge. During the hearing, I made an opening statement, conducted the direct-examination of my client, conducted cross-examination of his ex-employer, made a closing statement and submitted my written argument to the judge. Thankfully, we won the case. It was my first victory as an advocate. What's more, my client now has peace of mind and no longer has to worry about being homeless. He even bought a cell phone!

Having the ability to provide legal services for people who have nowhere else to turn is an experience that cannot be matched. It's like helping to give a voice to those that would not otherwise be heard. Thanks to organizations like Bet Tzedek and Equal Justice America, these individuals will continue to have a place to go for help and students like me will continue to have meaningful clerkship experiences. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Chad Haes
Southwestern Law School, 2009